



## **REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL**

State of Montana  
Department of Agriculture  
AGRICULTURE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL  
AGRICULTURE MARKETING & BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT  
**Montana Growth Through Agriculture Program**

**APPLICATION INFORMATION**  
and  
**APPLICATION FORMAT GUIDELINES**

Proposals are accepted on a quarterly basis with the following postmark deadlines:  
January 31 ~ April 30 ~ July 31 ~ October 31

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***Return Proposals to:***

Montana Growth Through Agriculture Program  
Montana Department of Agriculture  
PO Box 200201  
Helena, MT 59620-0201  
406-444-2402

***Legal Authority:***

(MCA) Section 90-9-401 Montana Codes Annotated  
(ARM) Section 4.16.701 Administrative Rule of Montana



State of Montana  
Department of Agriculture  
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**Montana Growth Through Agriculture Program**

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**State of Montana**  
**Department of Agriculture**  
**Montana Growth Through Agriculture Program**  
**Request for Proposal Application Information**

The Montana Growth Through Agriculture program was created by the 1987 Legislature to encourage economic development through innovations in various aspects of agricultural business. The program includes, among other things, the authority to establish development of an agricultural marketing and business development program.

The Montana Growth Through Agriculture Program is administered by the seven-member Montana Agriculture Development Council, which is attached to the Department of Agriculture.

**Goal: Strengthen and diversify Montana's agricultural industry**

The Montana Growth Through Agriculture program works to strengthen and diversify Montana's agricultural industry. Through monetary investments in projects, the program establishes public/private sector partnerships that assist in the development of innovative agricultural products and processes to add value to the agriculture industry, to create new jobs, and to expand small business opportunities.

***How the Program Works***

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Public and private entities and organizations, business and industry, educational institutions, local governments and individuals are eligible to submit proposals to the Montana Agriculture Development Council requesting an investment in a project. The Montana Agriculture Development Council reviews proposals on a quarterly basis to determine investments to be made in eligible projects.

Generally, to qualify for consideration, proposals must have practical, near-term application involving new or alternative technologies, practices or organizational arrangements that will stimulate expanded agricultural development, economic activity and employment growth.

The maximum limit in any one round of financing is \$50,000. Successive rounds of financing in which the Council participates for any one company may not occur within a nine-month period. The total amount of investment for any one company project may not exceed \$150,000.

**Type of Investments**

Public/private partnerships are established through the investment of Growth Through Agriculture funds in public or private projects. The Montana Agriculture Development Council determines the investments, and may elect to invest in a project through one of three avenues:

1. An **investment without repayment** is an award of money without the expectation that the funds will be repaid.

2. A **return on investment (ROI)** is an award of money with the expectation that all or a portion of the money will be repaid after a deferral period. No payments are required, and no interest is accrued during the initial time period. After this time, the award recipient repays the investment plus interest over a period of up to seven years. Should the business close and cease to be in operation, the council has the option to forgive all or a portion of the repayment obligation. Security provisions may be required and may be structured on an individual case basis.
3. A **seed capital loan** is an award of money with the expectation that the money will be repaid with interest. Security and repayment provisions are structured on an individual case basis. Interest rates on loans may change with economic conditions, but are fixed for the term of any particular loan. Applicants must complete and submit a loan application. Typically, loans are awarded for projects requesting funds to purchase equipment or pay for other capital expenditures.

### **Deadline for Submittal**

Growth Through Agriculture Program proposals must be submitted to the address listed in the “Request for Proposal Application Guidelines” segment of this document. There are four funding cycles in each year. **An original and ten (10) copies of the proposal must be postmarked no later than January 31, April 30, July 31, or October 31, to be considered for the funding cycle that follows each date.** Applicants are responsible for timely submission of proposals. Department of Agriculture staff members are available to review and provide feedback on draft applications submitted prior to an application deadline. To ensure adequate time for review and feedback, applicants are encouraged to submit drafts for review at least two weeks in advance of an application deadline.

### ***What Qualifies***

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#### **Project Eligibility**

Proposals must be responsive to the goals of the Montana Growth Through Agriculture program. Each proposal must be limited to one project or activity only. Projects should:

- Involve new or alternative production, processing, or distribution and marketing technologies, practices or organizational arrangements.
- **Specifically demonstrate a potential for further development of Montana's agricultural industry.**
- Be undertaken in Montana. Proposals for projects to be conducted outside Montana must present clear evidence that the Montana agriculture industry will benefit from the activity.

**The potential for near-term commercial application or use of the project results is a major consideration in proposal evaluation.**

## Eligible Costs

Eligible costs under the Growth Through Agriculture Program include, but are not limited to:

- Consultant Services (professional, technical, operational)
- Travel
- Advertising and Promotion
- Equipment
- Supplies and Materials
- Communication (telephone, postage, printing, etc.)
- Data Processing

*\*\*Project costs cannot be submitted for activities completed prior to council approval of the project\*\**

Other eligible costs can rarely include salaries and wages. **Program funds cannot be used for the payment of institutional overhead or other indirect costs.** These costs may be used as in-kind matching contributions from the applicant. In no case can funds be used for political purposes.

For the purposes for the GTA program, matching contributions are funds directed toward completing the project, which are from private, federal, state or commodity check-off sources, **in an amount that is at least equal to the GTA funds requested for the project.** Matching contributions may not include other state grants. Matching contributions may be provided in the form of cash, in-kind services, or other resources, indirect or overhead costs, or a combination of the above. Matching contributions may be provided by the project sponsor or by other supporter(s), and should be contributed as a direct result of the project, not as a result of normal day-to-day operations.

## ***Who Can Apply***

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Proposals for funding are accepted from:

- Individuals
- Businesses and Industry Organizations
- Public and Private Agencies and Organizations
- Educational Institutions
- Local Governments

Two or more individuals or organizations may propose to conduct a project jointly by submitting one application as co-applicants.

Applicants must demonstrate a proven ability to carry out all elements of the proposed project. In addition, applicants proposing to rely upon the expertise of another individual or organization to undertake any part of the project must clearly define the responsibilities of that party as well as provide evidence of that entity's willingness and demonstrated ability to undertake that area of responsibility.

Employees of the Montana Department of Agriculture and the Montana Department of Commerce and their immediate families, and members of the Montana Agriculture Development Council and their immediate families are excluded from eligibility for funding under the GTA Program. Immediate family includes mother, father, brother, sister, spouse and children.

## ***How to Apply***

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Please refer to the “Request for Proposal Application Guidelines” segment of this document for application procedures.

The application should provide members of the Montana Agriculture Development Council with sufficient information to determine that the proposed activity utilizes a sound approach, is cost efficient, enhances agricultural economic activity and development as outlined in the application, and merits financial support. Proposals will be judged principally on adherence or conformity to the objectives and criteria indicated in this RFP and appropriate rules and statutes. The Council will conduct a meeting, at which time the applicant may make a presentation in person. The Council will then make a decision whether to fund the project and notify the applicant within 30 days.

**Submission of a completed application for funding explicitly authorizes the Department of Agriculture and the Council to make inquiries as necessary, including requesting a credit report.** Financial information attained through such inquiries will be held confidential.

## ***How Projects are Selected***

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The Montana Agriculture Development Council meets on a quarterly basis to review project proposals and select which projects will be funded. Successful projects are funded through investment agreements under the Growth Through Agriculture Program.

### **Selection Criteria**

Selection of successful proposals will be on a competitive basis. All proposals will be judged against the following criteria, consistent with the stated objectives of the program:

1. Degree to which the proposed activity addresses a significant industry need or opportunity and evidence of industry support of such an activity.
2. Demonstrated experience and ability of applicant to undertake proposed activity.
3. Clearly demonstrated potential for near-term commercial application in terms of job creation, capital investment or other identifiable economic activity.
4. Adequacy of work plan and time frame to achieve the activity goals.
5. Degree of innovation and originality of proposed activity.

In addition, all proposals must include sufficient information to allow the above factors to be judged. Only those proposals that furnish complete information will be considered for evaluation. No partial proposals will be considered. The Montana Agriculture Development Council reserves the right to make a final selection or reject all proposals.

### **Awarding Process**

Applicants selected by the Council for funding will be notified by telephone within one week of the award and investment type. If accepted by the applicant, an investment agreement will be developed by the Council to define all project terms, conditions and responsibilities of the applicant. The investment agreement will, in addition, clarify all legal patents and proprietary rights that will result from the proposed activity. The investment agreement will incorporate this RFP and the successful applicant's final proposal among its provisions. Once the investment agreement is reviewed and signed by all applicable parties, a check(s) will be issued to the award recipient as outlined by a payment schedule determined most appropriate by the Council at the time of award.

Selected projects must comply with all applicable federal, state and local laws, licensing and regulations for funds to be awarded. Evidence of such compliance may be required before the investment check(s) is issued.

Applicants not chosen for funding will be notified in writing within 30 days by the Council. The notification will include an explanation of the Council's reasons for not funding the proposal.

### ***Reporting Requirements for Funded Projects***

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The Council reserves the right to determine the extent of reporting requirements, subject to modification over the course of the project. Interim reporting requirements will be based on the cost, duration and nature of the project. Typically, award recipients are required to submit a status report on the project and budget report on a quarterly basis. The Montana Agriculture Development Council and staff will be responsible for monitoring each funded project.

The award recipient will be **required to submit a comprehensive final report** upon the completion of the project. The final report should include:

- A comparison of actual findings and accomplishments of the project with goals and objectives described in proposal.
- Reasons for deviation from established goals of proposal.
- A clear description of the commercial application and economic benefits which accrued during the course of the project.
- A description of its immediate impacts.
- An estimate of its long-term commercial and economic benefits.

The recipient may be required to make an oral report to the Council at the conclusion of the project. The oral report would be made at a regularly scheduled Council meeting. The Council also reserves the right to conduct a follow-up survey of funded projects in order to determine long-term impacts.

## ***Other Considerations***

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### **Ownership And Publication Of Materials**

All information and materials generated by the proposed activity become the sole property of the State of Montana. The investment recipient will retain the right to utilize, reprint and distribute all said information and materials.

### **Intellectual Property**

All intellectual property rights including patents, copyrights, trademarks and trade secrets developed by a loan recipient with use of GTA funds provided by the council shall be owned by the recipient upon repayment.

### **Liability**

The Montana Agriculture Development Council will not be held liable for any costs incurred by any firm for work performed in the preparation of and production of a proposal or for any works performed prior to the formal execution of a contract.

### **Confidentiality**

All materials developed for an investment proposal, as a result of an investment agreement and/or documents submitted to the Council shall be considered public except any information in which there is a privacy interest and that interest and the demands of individual privacy clearly exceed the merits of public disclosure of the personal, financial, and business information contained therein.

### **Rights of Council**

The Council reserves the right to:

- Reject any or all proposals received in respect to this RFP.
- Waive or modify minor irregularities in proposals received after prior notification and concurrence of applicant.
- Clarify the scope of this RFP, within the program requirements and with appropriate notice to all applicants, to best serve the interests of the state of Montana.
- Amend the RFP specifications after their release, with appropriate written notice to all potential applicants.
- Require a good faith effort on the part of the project sponsors to work with the Council and the Department of Agriculture.
- Request a credit report, recent tax filing, or financial statement to clarify program eligibility.



## **Agriculture Marketing and Business Development Bureau**

### **Contact List**

*Contact the Agriculture Marketing and Business Development Bureau staff at (406) 444-2402 or by e-mail at [agr@mt.gov](mailto:agr@mt.gov) for assistance on your business and marketing needs.*

Christopher Ageson

***Bureau Chief***

Overall marketing, business development and oversight.

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Justin Hager

***Growth Through Agriculture Program Manager***

Growth Through Agriculture program administration.

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Chad Lee

***Business Development Officer***

Business Assistance.

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Collin Watters

***Industry & Commodity Development Officer***

Industry & commodity development.

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Vacant

***Marketing Officer***

International agricultural product marketing.

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Marty Earnhart

***Marketing Officer***

Meats & livestock marketing.

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Angelyn DeYoung

***Marketing Officer***

Domestic agricultural product marketing.

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Lindra Davies

***Marketing Technician***

Growth Through Agriculture program/marketing coordination.

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**Services and Support Available**

With a full staff, each focused on a particular area in the business of agriculture, the Department's Marketing and Business Development Bureau is well equipped to assist you in meeting the needs of your agribusiness. We will:

- Assist in the gathering of resources needed to develop and capitalize your venture.
- Provide valuable contacts in your industry or related industries.
- Serve as a liaison or matchmaker to develop a relationship with organizations new to your operation.
- Assist businesses entering new markets or working to expand your market share in existing markets.

**State of Montana**  
**Department of Agriculture**  
**Montana Growth Through Agriculture Program**  
**Request for Proposal Application Guidelines**

Proposals shall be **no more than eight (8) type written pages** in length with a 12 point font size and conform to the format described below. Applicants shall submit original and 10 copies required for consideration. Amendments, addendums, and additional information may be submitted to the council during an applicant's presentation. Applicants are encouraged to submit concise yet complete information in their application to the council. Proposals over eight (8) pages in length will not be considered. Please do not submit proposals that have been spiral-bound, or placed in binders, report covers, etc.

**I. Cover Sheet**

- Title of proposed project.
- Name and title of applicant(s) (indicate primary contact).
- Address and telephone number of applicant(s).
- Tax ID Number or Social Security Number of entity/person to receive funds.
- Duration of proposed project (include beginning and ending dates).
- Name, address and telephone number of contact person if other than applicant(s).
- Indicate any plans to apply for additional funds at later date (reminder: successive rounds of financing in which the Council participates for any one company may not occur within a nine-month period).

**II. Executive Summary**

Avoid using the executive summary to summarize your current business operation. Information provided in this section should apply to the project application only. Briefly summarize in **one page or less**:

- Problem, need or opportunity to be addressed.
- Project objectives.
- Description of the effort.
- Project's intended economic benefits.
- Overall background and approach used to address the need or opportunity.
- Role the project will play in achieving the objectives identified.

Focus your executive summary on what your project will do or deliver, what the investment funds will be used for, and how the project would impact Montana's economy.

**III. Identification of Need or Opportunity**

- Clearly state the specific need or opportunity to be addressed specifically with the project funds, indicating its importance.
- Explain any existing constraints or barriers.
- Describe the potential for near-term application of technologies, practices and/or organizational arrangements that will be developed as a result of the project.

- Provide a statement regarding the degree of innovation or originality of the proposed project.

#### **IV. Statement Of Objectives**

Provide a clear, concise description of the objectives of the proposed activity.

Consistency with the objectives of the Growth Through Agriculture Program should be considered in development of your proposal.

#### **V. Deliverables**

Deliverables are the anticipated end product of the proposed project, which makes the funded effort useful to the applicant or industry. The Deliverables section should briefly list the expected outcomes of the project. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Publication of "how to" guidelines or instructions.
- An analysis of economic, technical, or market feasibility for a specific development project.
- Publication of a management, business, marketing or capital formation plan.
- An engineering design plan, drawing or blueprint.
- A new prototype product, machine or process.
- A new organization or organizational structure.
- An audio-visual presentation of a new product or processing.
- Technique or methodology, or marketing and promotion effort.

#### **VI. Plan Of Work**

Provide a detailed description in timetable format of how the proposed project is to be carried out including:

- The tasks to be performed.
- Who will carry the individual tasks out.
- Where the tasks will be conducted.
- When the task will be completed.

The work plan should demonstrate the process of conducting the proposed activity and achieving the desired results.

#### **VII. Potential Use**

The practical or commercial application of the proposed project activity is important.

- Indicate the means by which the proposed project activity appears to have potential commercial application or may be broadly identified and quantified to the maximum extent possible.
- Describe economic development potential of the project measured in terms of job creation, capital investment, or other identifiable economic activity.
- Identify the groups or sectors that will benefit from the proposed activity.
- Identify the geographic regions of Montana that may benefit, if possible.

#### **VIII. Key Personnel**

Identify the key people who will be involved in carrying out the proposed project activity and their qualifications. Subcontractors, consultants and others not directly associated

with the applicant must be included. Qualifications of project participants will be an important consideration in granting funds.

## **IX. Facilities And Equipment**

Briefly describe the facilities and equipment, if any, required to carry out the proposed work. **Items to be purchased with investment funds should be fully described and justified in this section.**

## **X. Current And Pending Support**

- Demonstrate evidence of community and/or industry support of proposal.
- Identify parties providing financial match.
- Identify other sources of funds or resources received or to be received, and when they were or are expected to be provided. Evidence of a commitment for other required funds or resources must be provided before the Montana Growth Through Agriculture program funding allocations will be finalized.

## **XI. Proposed Budget**

The following two items must be submitted:

- A detailed budget description of project expenditures, and details on significant cost items. In all instances, consultant services must be detailed. The number and type of personnel directly involved in the project, their hourly or salaried rates, and estimated work days must be noted. Sources of all applicant contributions must also be indicated and the amount of sponsor cash contributions noted.
- Proposed Budget Form (see Exhibit A attached). This form should indicate investment funds requested by expenditure category, as well as the amount or value of the applicant's matching contribution.

**\*\*\*\*Funds cannot be requested for items purchased or completed prior to the council's approval of a project\*\*\*\***

**A minimum of one-to-one applicant matching contributions are required for all projects.** Matching funds are defined as funds contributed towards the completion of the project, which are from private, federal, state, or commodity check-off sources, in an amount that is at least equal to the GTA funds requested for the project. Matching funds must not include other state grant monies. The match may be provided in the form of cash, in-kind services, or other resources, indirect or overhead costs, or a combination of the above. Matching contributions may be provided by the project sponsor or by other supporter(s), and should be contributed as a direct result of the project, not as a result of normal day-to-day operations. Projects with levels of matching above the one-to-one level (or with cash matching funds) may have an advantage in the competitive selection process. The cost of previous research and development leading to the proposed project will not be considered as an eligible cost for matching purposes.

The maximum limit in any one round of financing is \$50,000. Successive rounds of financing in which the Council participates for any one company may not occur within a nine-month period. The total amount of investment for any one company project may not exceed \$150,000.

Funds from the GTA Program will be provided contingent upon receiving evidence of necessary matching funds from other sources, assuming the desired project timetable will be maintained.

NOTE: The Montana Agriculture Development Council reserves the right to audit an applicant's books and records relating to the performance of the project during and up to eight (8) years after completion of the project.

**Proposal Submittal Deadline**

Proposals submitted under this RFP must be postmarked no later than January 31, April 30, July 31 or October 31 to be considered during the funding cycle that follows each date.

Applicants with questions about information contained in this RFP should write or telephone:

Growth Through Agriculture Program Manager  
Montana Department of Agriculture  
Agriculture Development Department  
PO Box 200201  
Helena, Montana 59620-0201  
(406) 444-2402

**AGRICULTURAL MARKETING DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM**  
**Montana Growth Through Agriculture Program**

***PROPOSED BUDGET FORM (Exhibit A)***

(Completion and submittal required)

**PROJECT TITLE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**PROJECT APPLICANT:** \_\_\_\_\_

**PRINCIPAL CONTACT:** \_\_\_\_\_

**PROJECT DURATION:** \_\_\_\_\_

\*\*\*\*\*A one-to-one match is required prior to submission of application – this can include “In-Kind” as well as “Cash” match\*\*\*\*\*

EXPENDITURE CATEGORY	INVESTMENT FUNDS REQUEST	APPLICANT MATCH	TOTAL
Consultant Services			
Travel			
Advertising & Promotion			
Equipment			
Supplies & Materials			
Communications			
Data Processing			
Salaries and Wages			
Fringe Benefits	XXXXXXXXXX		
Indirect and Overhead	XXXXXXXXXX		
Other (Specify)			
<b>TOTAL*</b>			

\*Total Investment Funds Requested cannot exceed \$50,000